

CHAPTER ONE

Lieutenant Commander Jesse Reeves and his pilot Lieutenant Zachary Stokowski sat strapped in the cockpit of a U.S. Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin search and rescue chopper. They were roughly eighty miles off the coast of Jacksonville, Florida. It was 2:13 A.M.

They were cruising at an altitude of just over one hundred feet, a perfect altitude for spotting drug runners and derelict vessels. The waters between Jacksonville and as far south as Miami were a common entry point for the cocaine and illegal arms trade. This was a routine assignment for them and the two experienced seamen knew these waters like the back of their hand.

As a matter of fact, a few nights earlier they had stopped a suspicious fishing vessel that refused to radio in. When the Coast Guard officers inspected the ship, they found thirty or forty Haitian refugees below deck. This would indicate that human trafficking was also on the rise, again.

Tonight will be slow. Lt. Commander Reeves reassured himself wishfully. He had a migraine which rang like a church bell. So much, that his eyes were ever so sensitive to the esoteric lights and dials of the cockpit's dashboard and various consoles. Luckily, his headset drowned out the constant thumping of the Dolphin's rotor.

Lt. Stokowski had a cheerier disposition about him. The man was a fantastic pilot and he cherished every opportunity he had to fly. Even if it had to be in the early morning hours.

"How are you feeling?" The pilot said as if reading Jesse's mind.

Jesse expelled a gasping breath that wasn't quite a yawn, nor a sigh.

"Hell, I've been better Zach." He said rubbing his gloved hand over the part of his helmet that blocked his hand from his temple. "Fuck this migraine..."

"That bad huh? Well, if you need some, there should be Ibuprofen in the medical kit underneath the seat in the back. There should be some vikes back there too. I won't tell." Zach laughed, "...but the flight record might."

Jesse gave the pilot a look that said *ha fucking ha*. "Yeah... I'll go grab some. Keep it flat for me, would ya?"

"Sure thing boss."

As the chopper leveled itself out Jesse unhitched himself and worked his way to the back of the cabin. Just like Zach said, there was an orange duffle bag with an unmistakable bold red cross stitched on the side compartments.

Jesse unzipped a few compartments until he found what he was looking for. A twin packet of Ibuprophen, 200mgs. He ripped open the packet and swallowed the two white capsules. Without water, they tasted like moldy metal. A price he was willing to pay for some sweet relief. He reached further into the bag and pulled out a packet of saltine crackers. He opened the packet and fisted the crackers in his mouth. And once again, without water, it left his mouth rather unpleasant.

Suddenly, the Dolphin pitched upward knocking Jesse flat on his back. The sudden rise of altitude pinned him to the floor before the nose leveled forward again.

"Zach, what the hell...?"

Zach interrupted him,

"Sir, I think I saw something." The pilot said looking back at Jesse, "Shit, I'm sorry. Are you alright?"

"Yeah... fine." Jesse said pulling himself off the floor. "What's the problem?"

"I'm not sure...I had just a glance at it, but...There!" he pointed, "I saw it again."

Jesse made his way back the co-pilot's seat and looked over to where the Lieutenant was pointing. All he could see was a rather large fog bank off in the distance. Jesse judged it was probably ten to twenty miles thick.

"Fog?" Jesse said.

"No sir. I saw a flashing red light."

Jesse panned over the fog bank. He couldn't make out any lights.

"Are you sure?" Jesse said doubtfully.

"Yes, I am sure." Zach said in a mocking tone, "Just keep looking."

Once again Jesse searched for elusive red lights. And again, there was nothing.

"Well I don't see anything. Frankly, I think it's you who have been hitting those vicodins..."

"There!" The pilot pointed again.

This time he was right. Jesse could see the faint glow in the distance. A brief flash of red, deep within the fog.

"There is nothing charted over there." Zach said.

"You're right. There's nothing on radar either..." Jesse hesitated, it could be drug runners, it could be a lost buoy, "Shit, it could be anything."

"Should we call it in?"

"I don't really want to call in someone's downed weather balloon, do you?" Jesse said, "Lets find out what we're dealing with first. Bring us closer."

"Roger that." Stokowski smiled.

The aircraft made its approach into the dense fog. It wasn't quite a white out, but it was eerily dark even with the Dolphin's exterior lighting. Wisps of vapor tickled the windshield like ghostly fingers. There was absolutely no visible sign of the vast ocean below.

There was however, the increasing brightness of the mysterious flashing object they chose to investigate. And while they still couldn't see the object, one thing was certain, it definitely was not a weather balloon.

"It's a ship." Jesse said, "It's too big not to be."

Zach nodded in agreement, but seemed aloof,

"The gauges are all fucked up." Zach said tapping his index finger on the altimeter. It was rolling between unbelievable altitudes. The compass was also acting strange as its needle danced between North and South.

"Is it mechanical? Are we in trouble?"

"No sir." Zach brushed his chin, "Everything else is functioning as it should. It has to be an electrical interference..."

"Elmo's Fire?" Jesse said in a somewhat amused tone. He was referring to a well known term among pilots. St. Elmo's Fire (a strange maritime weather anomaly known in the medieval era) was a nickname modern pilots gave for what has come to be known as Electronic Fog, a rare anomaly that is known to occur in regions like the Bermuda and Dragon Triangles. Allegedly, the fog has electro-magnetic properties and has been frequently reported to attach itself upon aircraft and sea vessels. It also was commonly reported that the electro-magnetic interference would short out vital navigation instruments and block radio waves. And although the U.S. Military officially denies the existence of Electronic Fog, they very openly train pilots to fly through it.

"Heh, kind of looks like it, doesn't it boss?" Zach laughed, "Have you ever heard of it this far from the Triangle?"

"...No." Jesse said reluctantly, "Can you keep this thing in the air?"

"Blindfolded." Zach smiled. "Hey boss, maybe these poor bastards are lost."

It was a possibility. Smugglers often hid in fog banks in efforts to elude law enforcement. Jesse flicked the proper channels on the radio.

"Attention unidentified vessel." Jesse said with authority, "This is the United States Coast Guard. Identify yourself. Over."

A few minutes passed and there was only silence.

"Repeat. This is the United States Coast Guard to unidentified vessel. Reply. Over."

Again, there was silence.

"Are you in need of assistance? Over."

Dead silence.

"Check our radio boss, maybe we're down too." Zach said.

Jesse set the radio to the Coast Guard channels, Jacksonville, Miami, and even Fort-*fucking*-Lauderdale, but there was only a dull static hum. They were in radio silence.

"What now?" The pilot said anxiously.

"Man, you really get off on this shit, don't you?" Jesse hissed, "Like an adrenaline junkie or something."

"Hell fuckin' yeah boss." Zach retorted, "What'd you sign up for?"

The Lieutenant had a point. Jesse had been considering dropping the operation because of his migraine and the risk involved. Then again, there was his sense of duty. Whoever was on the ship was probably lost and if there were any survivors, they may need immediate attention.

"The pussy, Stokowski." Jesse joked, "Did you really need to ask?"

"You can't have both?" Zach said.

"I don't think the lady's like corpses." Jesse laughed, "Although, I feel like one right now I'll tell you."

"So we should be cowards then?" Zach said, "What about honor and glory?"

"Well there is that..." Jesse smiled, "Let's go find that ship."

"Roger that."

The fog was becoming increasingly thicker as they approached the vessel, but they could now see that there were actually multiple lights. It was clearly a very large vessel. It was also quite obvious that they were flashing a universal distress call.

"Sir, that thing is huge!" Zach said, "It can't be smugglers. It's at least the size of an oil barge from what I can make out."

"There aren't any chartered vessels out here Zach." Jesse said solemnly.

"Well... what the fuck could it be?"

"I have no fucking clue." Jesse said, "I don't know what to make of it."

They were fast approaching the ship now. But, the fog made perceiving distance practically impossible. Were it not for the Lieutenant's crack piloting they would have collided with the upper decks of the ship.

"Whoa!" Zach cried out, "What the fuck is that?"

Out of the fog appeared the port side bone white structure of a ship, so large, that even at their altitude of one hundred feet, the ship towered over them still. The chopper banked right and hovered itself level.

Jesse fired up the spotlight and shined it to their left. There was a series and rows of balconies that stretched as far as the fog allowed them to see. It was entirely dark on board except for the dim glow of the ship's emergency lighting.

"It looks like a cruise ship." Jesse said.

"I thought you said there weren't any chartered vessels out here."

"There isn't..." Jesse replied.

"Holy shit!" Zach yelled out, nearly leaping out of his seat, "You don't think that it's..."

"The Lady of Acadia?" Jesse interrupted.

"Yeah..." Zach said grimly.

"There's only one way to find out." Jesse said, "Take us to the bow."

The pilot spun the Dolphin around and pitched the aircraft forward, giving Jesse a better view of the vessel. The stacked rows of balconies seemed to stretch on endlessly. Jesse could see the distinct orange topped life boats below. A couple of them were missing.

"Two of the life boats have been jettisoned." Jesse pointed out.

Finally, they came upon the bow of the ship. It stuck out of the sea like a mighty horn. A massive anchor hung from the bower. It was larger than the Dolphin.

"Look at that thing boss." Zach marveled, "It's fucking huge!"

Jesse shined the light up on the bow, and there it was;

H.S. ***Lady of Acadia***
Queen of the North Atlantic

About seven months ago, the Lady of Acadia set sail on a ten day voyage that first left port out of St. John in New Brunswick, Canada. It would then make port in Halifax, Nova Scotia and from there to New York, where they would pick up the remaining passengers. The ship was then intended to dock in Bermuda and from there to Miami, before returning to New York and finally the Bay of Fundy.

Unfortunately, a tropical storm named Buford grew to hurricane strength and arched its trajectory towards Bermuda. The captain of the Lady reportedly changed course and headed south into the northern tip of the Bermuda Triangle to avoid the coming storm. It would be the last time anybody heard, or made contact with the Lady.

Although the remains of the ship were never found, the official report was that a rogue wave had capsized the vessel and that all four thousand seven hundred and thirty three passengers were assumed lost to the sea.

Even now, the Navy and the Coast Guard sought the final resting place of the Lady with the help of the British and Canadian governments. They scoured the entire Triangle and even as far as the eastern edge of the Sargasso Sea. But, nothing was ever found.

It was an event that captivated the nation. Naturally, the conspiracy theorists had a field day over such a story. The internet quickly became riddled

with their winded rants and bullshit anecdotes. It was usually *government this*, and *aliens that*.

And now here it was, at first glance relatively unscathed, floating roughly a hundred miles off the coast of northern Florida, several hundred miles northwest of the Bermuda Triangle.

It never occurred to anyone that the currents of the North Atlantic Gyre might have brought the ship inland. The search parties never thought to look this close to the States. Since the Lady of Acadia had been assumed to have been submerged, the recovery effort had focused its search on the Sargasso Sea to the southeast where the Lady was last reported.

"I can't..." Jesse muttered, "I can't fucking believe it."

Zach said nothing. Instead, he just stared in disbelief at the bold decals as if trying to convince himself it read something else.

"It really is it isn't it?" Zach finally said in awe, "The god damn Lady of Acadia!"

"Bring us up higher." Jesse said pointing upwards, "I want a good look at the bridge."

But the pilot didn't hear Jesse's order. He was still in shock at the sight of the infamous vessel.

"Zach?" Jesse snapped his finger, "Yo!"

"Huh?" Zach came out of his daze, "Sorry sir. What did you say?"

"I said bring her up. I want to check out the bridge."

Zach brought the Dolphin up over the hull. A large **H** marked the helipad on the deck below. Ten stories of port holes stacked all the way to the bridge above.

Jesse shined the spotlight into the bridge. It was empty. He flicked the switch for the external megaphone. It crackled to life.

"THIS IS THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO THE LADY OF ACADIA." His voice boomed, "IF THERE ARE ANY PASSENGERS ON BOARD, PLEASE RESPOND IMMEDIATELY."

Jesse set the message on loop. There was no response. The bridge remained dark and seemingly void of life.

"Well this is fucking creepy." Zach said, "What now boss?"

Jesse thought for a moment. It was a very large ship, one of the largest ocean liners in the world, as a matter of fact.

The Lady of Acadia was modeled after the sister ships the Allure of the Sea and the Oasis of the Sea. It was over three hundred meters long and stood almost two hundred and fifty feet above the water line. The Lady literally had miles worth of corridors.

"Let's check the rest of the ship." Jesse said, "I'd like to get a tally on the number of lifeboats. It couldn't hurt to check for damage as well."

"She looks pretty damn good from this angle." Zach said, "I haven't noticed any fire damage. Have you?"

"No." Jesse replied, "Zach, there were over four thousand passengers on that boat. A full rescue vessel can hold just under four hundred people. I only saw two missing. Where the hell are all these people?"

"Maybe they were sick?" The pilot said.

"You think?" Jesse said. It was a strong possibility. Bacterial outbreaks weren't exactly uncommon in the cruise industry, "Have you ever heard of someone dying from the norovirus?"

"Well...no." Zach said reluctantly, "But, do you remember the legionaires outbreak of... what was it? Two thousand three? Two thousand four?"

"I do, but only eight people contracted legionaires." Jesse scoffed, "We're talking almost five thousand people Zach. There's a bit of a stretch there buddy."

"No, not really." Zach retorted, "When you think about it, they quarantined those people. They also had outside communication."

"Hmm..."

"Besides, who says it has to be legionaires?" Zach continued, "It could be ebola, or some equally awful shit..."

"Ebola?" Jesse said, "Now that ones a stretch."

"My point is," The pilot paused, "...it could be anything. We just don't know."

Jesse's migraine began to pulsate again. It made it difficult for him to think. On the bright side, the ibuprophen was beginning to work and Jesse's eyes were now less sensitive to light.

"Fuck." Jesse moaned, "Only one way to find out."

The pilot looked Jesse up and down with uncertainty.

"...You want to get on that thing?" Zach said doubtfully.

Jesse counted the lifeboats along the starboard side of the ship. All of the rescue vessels were accounted for. None were missing.

"Only two lifeboats..." Jesse said grimly, "We need to know what's on that ship."

"Are you even up for this?" Zach said, "Maybe we should just head back and call it in?"

"I'm fine." Jesse assured, "We can handle this."

The aircraft began to make a loop around the stern of the ship. Through the fog, they could see a massive swimming pool on the upper deck with two surprisingly long waterslides. However, there were still no sign of people anywhere.

"What are your orders?" The pilot asked.

"Take me to the landing pad." Jesse said, "It was on the bow."

"Roger that."

The Dolphin made its way back around portside and once again came upon the massive anchor that hung from the bower. The chopper pitched upwards over the deck and hovered over the green and yellow landing pad. Fog blasted out from underneath the Dolphin in all directions.

"Bring her down." Jesse said waving his hand in a downward motion.

The pilot eased the chopper down towards the landing pad real slowly. Without the altimeter, Zach had to judge the landing distance by eye. He hand cranked out the landing gear and the aircraft thumped down on the deck of the ship with a heavy thud. The impact struck Jesse's migraine like a gong.

"Whoops." The pilot chuckled, "You ok Boss?"

"Ugh..." Jesse moaned, "I'll live."

Jesse unlatched himself and once again made his way to the back of the cabin. This time he opened up a compartment above the rear seat and removed a large crimson satchel marked with a bio-hazard symbol. He removed his quarantine gear and environmental suit from the satchel and then

suited up. Then he reached under the rear seat and removed the medical bag and removed an orange bullet shaped flashlight. He latched his flashlight to his utility belt. It hung adjacent to his .40 caliber SIG-Sauer P229R DAK, a standard issue sidearm for the U.S. Coast Guard.

"What's the plan?" Zach said.

"I'm going into the ship." Jesse replied, "I'll try to make contact with any survivors and take an assessment of the situation here. I want you take off out of this fog and make contact with anyone and everyone you can get a hold of. Tell them to notify the CDC. Give them our coordinates and then get your ass back here."

"Yes sir." The pilot said, "Be careful."

Jesse patted the Zach on the shoulder and then he opened the door and stepped out of the aircraft. He closed the door and tapped on the hood. Zach gave him a thumbs up and then began to lift off the landing pad.

Jesse was heading towards the bridge of the ship when he felt it. It was every chopper pilot's nightmare scenario, a heavy crosswind during a confined takeoff.

Jesse looked up just in time to see the Dolphin that was now roughly forty feet above the deck, sliding in the wind towards the upper level of the ship. The pilot tried a quick evasive maneuver, but it wasn't fast enough. The tail rotor connected with the white walls of the ship and the tail was entirely ripped off. Shredded plastic and metal exploded from the impact. It nearly hit Jesse.

The aircraft began a wild topsy-turvy spin that spiraled out around the ship and away from Jesse's view.

Jesse could hear the propellers being violently ripped away and it was followed by a vicious crash. Smoke and debris poured over the starboard side deck.

"Oh my God!" Jesse thought aloud, "I fucking killed him."

Jesse ran to the side of the ship, but through the deep fog and darkness he could not make out any sign of the wrecked chopper. He could smell the burning plastic and intake fluids. Then he made his way over to the door leading to the bridge section of the ship. It was a pressure locked door. Jesse spun the crank and the door popped open.

It was an empty corridor that was dimly lit by the rows of emergency lighting on the floor. There was staircase that Jesse assumed went up at least ten stories. He would have to make his way to the upper deck to find any sign of Zach and the fallen chopper.

He corkscrewed up the stairs for what felt like an eternity before he came across the door which led to the bridge and another pressure locked door which led to the deck above. He tried to open the door to the bridge first, but it was electronically sealed. Then he cranked open the door to the deck and followed the stairs that led him out onto the upper deck. The fog was so thick that he could not even see the smoke stack of the ship. He could only identify that it was there by the brightly flashing red light on the mast.

The deck was eerily void of life, but Jesse wasn't concerned too about that. He rushed his way over to the starboard side. He searched over the railing until he caught a glimpse of smoke. The chopper appeared to have crashed into a balcony of one the cabins below. Jesse estimated that it was probably six or seven floors down.

"Zach!" he cried, "Can you hear me?"

CHAPTER TWO

Zach woke up. He had no memory of being knocked out. He could only piece together the crash. His vision was very blurry. The fumes of the hydraulic fluids burned his nose. He didn't smell any fuel, which was somewhat of a relief.

He was still strapped to the seat, but the seat was dislodged and Zach was pinned to the floor. He went to unlatch his belt, but he couldn't do it. Something was wrong with his right arm. He raised it to his face and saw that it was broken just below the elbow. The bone was sticking out of the skin. Blood poured out of the wound like a fountain. The pain hadn't set in yet, Zach was still in shock. He felt so very cold.

The injured pilot unlatched his belt with his left and flopped onto the floor. He tried to pick himself up, but his right leg was caught on something. He raised himself up and saw that a jagged sixteen inch shard of metal had impaled the meat behind his right calf bone. It had him like a worm on hook.

Zach lay back and struggled a few deep breaths.

"Jesus..." He sighed.

Zach pulled himself up, psyched himself up and tried to pull his leg off of the jagged spike. He only moved it about an inch before the pain suddenly set in.

"Fuck!" Zach screamed in agony. In a fury he punched the seat next to him with his left hand. He almost broke his hand, but it took away from the pain of his wounds.

He began to lose consciousness again. His eyes began to darken and he was feeling faint.

"Am I...dying?" He asked himself softly.

Everything went dark and then,

"Zach!" It was Jesse's voice, "Can you hear me?"

"Jesse!" Zach cried out in pain, "Help me..."

"Zach!" Jesse replied, "Are you alright?"

"Nah man...I'm all fucked up. You have help me..."

"I'm coming Zach!" Jesse reassured, "Hang in there!"

How the fuck am I going to get to him? Jesse thought, it was impossible for him to judge how many floors down the wreck was. He certainly didn't have time to waste running back and forth finding out.

He finally decided he was going to repel down the side of the ship. He didn't bring rope with him, so he would have to use a life preserver. This was going to be dangerous. It was over two hundred feet down to the water, which he could not see. He would also have to leave the medical bag behind, it would be too heavy, too bulky.

Jesse took a few deep breaths and hurled himself over the railing repelled down into the fog. Each balcony he passed he kept getting the sense that someone was watching him. But, he would shine his flashlight on only an empty state room, each relatively undisturbed.

About four floors down Jesse nearly lost his grip and slid down ten feet. The friction of the rope burned his hand, but he caught himself and held tight.

He could see the wreck of the Dolphin more clearly now. The tail was sticking out of the room. It must have crashed nose first.

Jesse repelled himself down a little further. His feet were now touching the side panel of the chopper. He reached over and pulled himself onto the balcony.

"Zach?!" Jesse yelled, he was out of breath. The climb had taken a lot out of him and he felt exhausted.

"I'm over here!" Zach yelled back from the wreckage, "Hurry!"

Jesse shined the light into the chopper and saw the pilot pinned to the floor. He made his way to Zach, who was waving to him.

"Don't move." Jesse said.

"My leg!" Zach cried, "I can't..."

Jesse shined the light on Zach's wounded leg. He was losing a lot of blood. Jesse also noticed the bone sticking out of the pilot's arm.

"Oh man..." Jesse whispered, "Don't worry Zach, you're going to be alright. Stay with me now."

Jesse pulled out a piece of cloth and rolled it into a cylinder. Then he put the cloth in Zach's mouth.

"Bite down on this." Jesse said.

Zach bit down on the cloth. Jesse grabbed the pilot's wounded leg and then yanked it off the metal spike. He was well aware that the worse thing to do was to remove the leg from the object, but he had no choice. He couldn't leave Zach like this.

Zach screamed through the cloth. The pain made him pass out.

"Zach?" Jesse said.

He removed the cloth from the pilot's mouth and lightly slapped him on the cheek. Zach opened his eyes.

"Grab on to me." Jesse said, "I'm getting you out of here."

Jesse hooked his arms under Zach's shoulders and carefully dragged him out of the wreck and into the stateroom. It was smaller than the others. *Probably economy class*, Jesse thought.

Jesse checked the room for any signs of people, but there was no one there and the cabin was too wrecked to distinguish whether anything belonged to anyone.

Zach was going back into shock, but he was still conscious. Jesse picked up the pilot and slung him up onto his shoulders. He made his way over to the door and carefully pulled it open without dropping Zach.

The hallway was long and dark. It was only dimly lit by the little emergency lights that lined the floor. From what Jesse could tell it was empty, but Zach caught something moving in the corner of his eye.

"Jesse..." Zach said softly, "I saw... something... someone?"

"Hello?!" Jesse yelled at the top of his lungs, "Is someone there? We need help!"

There was no answer. Jesse couldn't see anything but an empty hallway.

"Zach..." Jesse said, "You're hallucinating."

The lieutenant said nothing. As far as he was concerned, Jesse was probably right. He had lost a fair amount of blood after all.

"I need the medical kit." Jesse sighed, "I had to leave it on the upper deck. I can't carry you that far. You won't make it that long without a tourniquet."

Jesse tried to open the door to the cabin across the hall, but it was locked. So he decided to give it a solid kick by the handle and the door popped right open.

This cabin was relatively the same size as the one across the hall. There were suitcases and clothing strewn about, but there were no signs of people. Jesse gently placed the wounded pilot onto the bed. He ripped the sheets and spun them up into a strong rope and then tied the tourniquet on Zach's leg and arm. The bleeding slowed immediately.

"Ok," Jesse said, "I need to get that bag."

"What?!" Zach sat up, "You're gonna fucking leave me here?"

"Lay the fuck down Zach!" Jesse yelled, "You're in no condition to go anywhere, but I need that bag."

"You can't..." Zach coughed, "Fuck!"

"Don't worry." Jesse assured him, "I'll be right back. I promise."

"...Go." Zach waved.

Jesse nodded and then turned and high tailed it out the door. He made note of the cabin number;

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He raced down the long hallway. It felt endless, but eventually he came across the door of a service staircase. Once again, he spiraled his way up the towering stairway. He was out of breath, but he didn't notice. Jesse was pushing himself to his limits. He had to admit, it was times like these that made him feel like an action hero. He was pretty sure Zach would appreciate that sentiment.

When he reached the top, he damned near collapsed. Jesse rested his hand on the door frame and took in a few deep accelerated breaths. He opened the door and walked back into the fog.

Wisps of moisture massaged the empty deck like the ethereal fingers of Poseidon. They glowed a menacing crimson with each flash of the distress bulb.

Jesse found the medical bag. He lifted the strap onto his shoulder and then he began to head back to the staircase.

"Hey mister." A voice called out from the mist. It sounded like a young boy.

Jesse whipped around and gazed deep into the fog. He didn't see anybody. He could've sworn that whatever he heard was right behind him. Was he hearing things? His migraine was pounding like a war drum after all that exercise. He finally decided he didn't hear anything and turned back to the staircase.

"Stop!" The boy's voice cried out.

Jesse spun around, but once again there was no one there.

"Who's there?" Jesse shouted, "Come out here, I'm here to help you."

There was only silence and an empty deck. A chill breeze came over Jesse.

"You can't help me..." The boy said, he was crying.

"It's alright kid. I can help." Jesse assured him, "Where are you?"

"You can only help yourself mister." The boy sobbed, "Just go. Get out of here."

"Come on kid. I'm not going to hurt you." Jesse said impatiently.

There was a brief pause.

"Look kid, I'm here to help, but I don't have time to play hide and seek with you. Just stay put and I'll come right back for you."

"Please don't go back down there mister. She'll find you. She's already taken an interest in your friend."

Jesse stopped in his tracks.

"The fuck...?" He said to himself.

"Don't go!" The boy insisted, "Don't go!"

"Kid, just stay put." Jesse said, "I'll be right back."

Jesse opened the door and stepped into the stairway.

"Don't...go..." The boy began to sob again.

Jesse looked back, he still didn't see anybody. He felt a shiver down his spine, but he quickly shook it off, closed the door, and headed back into the belly of the ship.

"Dad?" Zach said.

Zach's father was standing over him, dressed in his full ceremonial army uniform. He had a bottle of Wild Turkey in his hand.

"Well ain't this some sorry shit." Colonel Stokowski said.

"...Dad?" Zach said again.

"Shut up boy." The colonel said sharply, "I always said you wouldn't amount to shit. Glad to see you haven't disappointed me for once."

"But, Dad..."

"I said shut your fucking mouth boy." The Colonel continued, "The Coast Guard? I mean really Zach, I'd been happier if you turned out a hippy queer. At least then I could've disowned you properly."

"Why do you say these things...?" Zach began to cry.

"Just look at you, you fucking baby." The Colonel laughed, "Crying like a bitch."

Zach said nothing.

"What's the matter Zachary?" The Colonel mocked, "Maybe I didn't hit you enough? Make you a man."

"Fuck you!" Zach screamed. "I'm a goddamn pilot, and a damn good one too!"

"Oh, a pilot he says?" The Colonel laughed, "Yeah, you're a real crack pilot son. Because good pilots crash multimillion dollar military helicopters in the middle of a rescue operation."

"It wasn't my fault..." Zach sobbed, "There was a crosswind and..."

"Oh please." The Colonel interrupted, "Don't give me that shit. You're always making excuses."

"Dad, its not..."

"Shut the fuck up." The Colonel said, "Face it boy. You fucked up and now you are going to die here."

"No..." Zach tried to speak, but the words were welling up in his throat.

“Oh yes. You are going to die here.” The Colonel laughed, “Your friend too.”

The Colonel was cackling with laughter. Suddenly his skin began to flake, peel, and rot off his face revealing a skull and pussy eyeballs. Something was pushing the eyeballs out of his sockets. It was maggots.

Zach screamed in horror.

“Is that what you want Zach? Zachary?” The Colonel teased, “To be dead, like me?”

“No!” Zach pulled his sidearm from its holster, “Stay away from me!”

“You would pull a piece on me wouldn’t you, you ungrateful little shit?!” The Colonel threw his bottle at his son. It shattered on the wall above Zach, showering glass and whiskey everywhere. “Well? What are you waiting for?”

Zach said nothing. He stared blankly at his rotted father. His SIG was shaking wildly in his hand.

“You little pussy...” The Colonel’s words were as sharp as daggers, “Do it. Do it!!!”

In hysterical rage, Zach closed his eyes and squeezed the trigger until the SIG clicked empty. When he opened his eyes his father was gone. The whiskey, and the broken bottle were also gone.

“Jesus Zach!” It was Jesse’s voice, “You fucking shot me!”

Jesse took cover against the wall outside the door. It all happened so fast. He had turned to enter the room only to be met with a hail of wild gun fire. A stray bullet had grazed his right bicep. He was lucky, it was only a flesh wound.

“Boss...?” Zach said, “Is that you?”

“Yeah,” Jesse yelled, “Put the gun down!”

Zach tossed his sidearm on the floor.

“Oh fuck!” Zach cried out, “Are you alright?”

Jesse poked at his wound. It stung, but it hardly bled. It was mostly burn damage from the heat and friction of the bullet.

"It's not bad." Jesse said, "Just grazed me. I'll live. Did you put the fucking gun down?"

"Yeah," Zach choked up, "I'm sorry boss, I think I'm hallucinating..."

"You're not the only one." Jesse said to himself.

"What?"

"I said don't worry about it." Jesse replied, "I'm coming in. Don't shoot me...asshole."

Jesse entered the room. Zach was sprawled out on the bed. He was very pale, the sheets were soaked with blood. Jesse placed the medical bag on the floor next to the bed. He removed a pair of sheers from the bag and cut Zach's pants below the knee exposing the pilot's bare leg.

"You're lucky Zach," Jesse said, "It didn't cut anything major from what I can tell... mostly tissue damage."

"Give me some morphine." Zach muttered, "Please!"

Jesse shook his head,

"I can't... do that." Jesse said reluctantly, "I'm sorry."

"What? Why the fuck not?" Zach shrieked, "It fucking hurts!"

"You've lost way too much blood Zach. If I give you morphine you'll go into cardiac arrest." Jesse paused, "I'm... going to need you awake for this."

"You've got to be fucking kidding me." Zach said.

"I really wish I were..."

Jesse had his work cut out for him. He had administered stitches before, but never on such a greivous scale. It was even worse that he lacked that extra pair of hands that he needed to hold the clamps. A job that was unfortunately left up to Zach should he stay conscious and coherent enough for it. If he couldn't Jesse was going to have to become ambidextrous real fast.

Zach's leg was a mess. There was blood everywhere, but Jesse managed to stabilize the bleeding. He began to stitch the wound. Unfortunately, every time he brought the needle through Zach would tense up making the job all that much harder, and that much more painful for the Lieutenant.

This wasn't the worst wound Jesse had ever witnessed, he recalled an explosion at an oil refinery a few years back. The refinery suffered a static malfunction and ruptured several tankers, almost compromising the entire

facility. The workers there were taken completely by surprise. Whoever wasn't killed instantly by the fallen debris were probably burned alive underneath it. Those who were lucky enough not to get caught under debris were violently peppered with searing hot shrapnel and also suffered critical internal trauma due to the shock of the blast. It was a brutal mess.

He remembered one poor bastard who had a two foot piece of metal that had shot right into his skull... and he was still alive. The man was flailing around on the ground screaming bloody murder,

"I can't see! I can't fucking see!" The man cried out. It was an image that Jesse would never forget.

Jesse removed an IV bag from the medical kit, plugged it into Zach's forearm, and then hung it on a table lamp next to the bed. His first project would be to clean the wound. It would be a difficult task because of the depth of the puncture wound. Jesse doubted he would be able to treat all the affected tissue. He would have to rely on powerful antibiotics until he could get Zach the medical attention he needed.

The task was long and tedious. Jesse checked his watch;

3:03 A.M.

"What the fuck?" Jesse said.

"What...?" Zach winced, "What is it?"

"Nothing." Jesse replied, "Try to relax."

After Jesse was satisfied that he couldn't disinfect the wound any further he began to stitch the muscle tissue. Zach screamed in agony. Tears were streaming down his face, but he held together.

When all was said and done, Jesse had applied over two hundred stitches and forty seven staples into the pilot's leg and arm. Jesse had tried to set the bone as well as he could and he wrapped the arm up with a heavy layer of gauze real tight to keep the bone in place. He tied together a sling and wrapped it tightly between Zach's arm and shoulder.

The whole process took what had felt like hours. Jesse checked his watch again;

3:03 A.M.

"Huh."

"What?" Zach said.

"I think my watch is broken." Jesse said reluctantly.

But it wasn't just Jesse's watch that disturbed him. Time itself seemed to have come to a standstill. Certainly hours had passed, but there was no sign of daylight.

Jesse was also beginning to go stir crazy. There were so many questions that needed to be answered, and yet he would dare not leave Zach's side until his condition stabilized. In fact, some time later his concerns would prove true. Zach stopped breathing and Jesse had to resuscitate him.

A considerable amount of time passed, and yet the sun did not rise. Jesse had no idea how long had passed, it had felt like days. He hadn't slept, he did everything he could not to. On occasion he would venture out into the halls, examining rooms and directories of the ship's layout. All of the rooms were eerily uninhabited. There were no suitcases, no cell phones, laptops, or even a single article of clothing. The bedsheets were all neatly tucked in, the floors appeared to be vacuumed, and aside from months of accumulated dust the rooms were relatively spic and span.

It also occurred to Jesse that by now CentCom had received the flight records indicating the Dolphin's disappearance. He was certain that rescue was on the way. Every once and a while he would quickly venture back up onto the deck awaiting the sound of propellers or the lights of patrolling vessels. But, just as the sun never came, neither did help.

Jesse had tried to find the boy whom he (may, or may not) had spoken to. But, there was nothing but an empty deck.

When Jesse returned to the cabin, he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. *What the fuck is going on here?* He thought to himself, *Is any of this real? Am I going fucking bonkers? Maybe I have a brain tumor...* These thoughts repeated themselves over and over in his mind. Anxiety overwhelmed him like a white hot blanket. His chest became tight. The room began to spin and he could not breathe. Just before everything went dark the room was suddenly filled with people. They did not speak, they only stood there with dark empty eyes staring at Jesse as he writhed on the ground. He opened his mouth to scream, but nothing came out. Then everything went dark.

CHAPTER THREE

The sun gleamed in the turquoise sky. It was in the upper nineties and as humid as a sauna. But, that wasn't uncommon in the Keys, especially in July.

Jesse was nursing a mai tai under a straw cabanna with his friends Chet and Franco. They were on a fortnight leave out of Ft. Lauderdale and they decided to jump in Chet's 66 Tempest, put the top down, and tour the Florida Keys. That was five hours ago.

They took a pit stop in Islamorada for cocktails and lunch, but mostly for the cocktails. The island was particularly empty this time of year, save a few college kids backpacking the Heritage Trail. There were a few locals about, but they mostly kept to themselves.

Chet was flirting with the waitress who was seemingly taken in by his Cajun charm. He was wearing a white and tan bowling shirt and yet neither of them noticed the blotched red stain from Chet's dripping bloody mary. He was the lecher of the group for sure, but that wasn't saying much. Apparently, her name was Anna and she was from Marathon. She was complimenting Chet on his fine taste in automobiles.

Francisco Delahoya, or Franco as he liked to be called, just returned from the men's room. He had the awkward stagger you'd expect from a man who just drank four beers in under thirty minutes.

"You gonna make it there Franco?" Jesse teased, "We just got here."

"Fuck your face Reeves." Franco laughed, "You know I could drink your ass under the table."

"Is that a challenge?" Jesse said.

"You know it is whitey." Franco smiled, "Line them up."

As if on cue, Chet took a moment to break away from his conversation.

"Now why don't y'all put this here shit on hold till we reach Key West?" He mused.

"Yeah, what ever the fuck he just said." Jesse agreed.

"Bitch." Franco muffled under a fake cough.

Jesse offered Franco a coy smile and then returned to his mai tai. Two sea gulls were fighting over a french fry on top of a garbage can. Jesse tossed an ice cube at them, but it didn't phase them one way or the other.

"Not much surf down here, huh?" Jesse commented on the pitiful ankle high waves that stumbled upon the white sand.

"You say that now man, but wait a month or two." Franco replied, "When it gets further into hurricane season."

"Hurricane season..." Jesse spat, "More like overtime."

"Yeah..." Franco sighed, "You ain't wrong about that."

"You used to surf, right?" Jesse finished his mai tai and then shook his glass at the waitress, "Can I get another please?" The waitress only nodded and headed off for the kitchen.

"Yeah, I learned when I was stationed on Honolulu." Franco said, "You want to talk waves man? Fucking glorious."

"What about down here?" Jesse asked.

"You'll get waves man, but not like Hawaii."

"You ever see any of them tsunamis?" Chet said.

"Here?" Franco said rather confused. Chet and Jesse laughed.

"In Hawaii dipshit."

"Oh..." Franco said, "No. We got warnings all the time man, but they were all drills as far as I knew. I *did* see a fifty foot rogue wave capsize a tanker though...crazy shit."

The waitress returned with Jesse mai tai, "Here you go hun." She said.

"Thanks." Jesse replied. She smiled back at him, winked at Chet, and then returned to her rounds.

"How big was the tanker?" Jesse asked.

"I'd say it was about the size of a football field." Franco replied, "Three hundred feet, maybe more."

"Damn..." Jesse sipped his mai tai, "So what happened? It flipped completely over?"

"It was just after a tropical storm... Paul I think it was. Anyway, we were getting swamped with reports of high surf off the coast of Kauai. Eventually we got a distress call from this ship, the barge... King Kahuna I think it was called. They reported they were experiencing choppy seas and requested an immediate evac." Franco took a handful of peanuts and popped a couple in his mouth, "Shit, when we got there that ship was being tossed around like a fucking

ragdoll man. There was no way we could safely board the ship, let alone be steady enough to pull these poor fucks off of it..."

"What did you do?" Chet asked, he finally noticed the stain on his shirt, he made a foolhardy effort to rub it out with his thumb, sighed and gave up.

"Fuck man, what could we do?" Franco shook his head, "Those waves rolled between twenty and thirty feet man, all we could do was watch and wait for an opportunity. It never came obviously, but those waves kept rolling and suddenly out of nowhere this one monster wave starts forming port side. We knew, and I'm sure those poor bastards did too, as soon as that wave began to take shape it was going to be bad, *real* bad. That wave was so big, and it hit so hard that it rolled right over the ship, literally capsizing it entirely under water. For at least a minute, we had no visual sign of the ship before the air pocket in the hull sent it back to the surface. It took about ten minutes before it sank like a fucking stone."

"There were no survivors?" Jesse said.

"There were some bodies floating in the water. We had no way to tell if they were alive or dead. We were ordered not to attempt rescue until the seas calmed. It took three days..." Franco ate some more peanuts, "No, no survivors."

"Jesus..." Chet said.

For a moment the three men were silent, nursing their drinks and staring off into the horizon. Then Jesse thought of something;

"What was the ship's cargo?" Jesse asked.

"What?" Franco replied, as if not hearing the question.

"What was the ship carrying?" Jesse said again, "I mean, if it was oil I'm sure that shit would have been all over the news."

"Nah it wasn't oil." Franco corrected himself, "I mean it was *an* oil, but it wasn't petroleum. I believe it was like vegetable oil or some shit for cooking. Completely biodegradable."

"Unlike that BP shit." Jesse spat.

"Now now, there'll be no more of that talk soldier." Chet chastised.

To that the three men raised their glasses, chugged them down, and flipped the bill. A short time later they were back on the road again. Naturally Chet was driving, Jesse rode shotgun, and Franco in the back. They were back on the Overseas Highway and heading west, soon to be out of Key Largo.

Chet clicked the radio to life just in time to catch the end of Ted Nugent's Stranglehold. Then the DJ spoke the local weather conditions and then he went to a commercial break.

The 1966 Pontiac Tempest Sprint 6 Custom came to a red light and rolled to a stop. Its Montero Red paint job glistened in the tropical sun while the Tempest's four barrel six cylinder engine purred at an intimidating idle.

"Not a bad day to be in a convertible, eh?" Chet said, naturally he was driving.

"No shit." Jesse replied, he was riding shotgun, "This car is fucking sweet. How much did you pay for it?"

"I didn't." Chet said, "It was my uncle's. He babied the shit out of this here car. Guy hardly ever drove it, just rubbed it with a diaper."

"The car is fucking mint man." Franco said, "Your uncle die or something?"

"Yeah Franco, he did." Chet rolled his eyes, "He left the car to me. Its practically right off the factory floor. Pretty rare model too. The sprint package was expensive and it only lasted from sixty-six to sixty-nine."

"What's the difference?" Jesse asked.

"About sixty horsepower," Chet smiled and revved the engine, "They decided to go with a large six as opposed to the typical eight. It offered greater horsepower with less torque, which gives it better handling. Plus, this bitch gets ten thousand RPMs."

"Yeah," Jesse said, "Well prove it."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." Jesse said.

"Hey Castro, what do you think?" Chet said, "Want to see if this a ten second automobile?"

"Fuck you honky," Franco scoffed, "Punch it!"

When the light turned green Chet popped the clutch and the beast shot off like a bat out of hell. The G force sank Jesse into his seat, in no time at all the needle hit one forty. Then Chet eased the Tempest down to a more reasonable and yet still excessive speed.

"Holy shit man!" Franco cried out, "I think my balls are in my throat."

Chet laughed, "What's wrong? I thought you like balls in your throat."

"Ha ha, fuck you asshole." Franco spat, "Seriously man, *holy* shit."

"Does kind of get your blood pumping, huh?" Chet said.

"I think all the blood rushed to my ass." Jesse replied.

"And we all know how you like things rushed into your..."

"Shut the fuck up you dick sneeze." Jesse interrupted.

"Dick sneeze?" Chet laughed.

"If the shoe fits." Jesse replied.

The DJ came back after the commercial break, "*Welcome back everybody, I'd like to pay homage to the late great Levon Helm singer of The Band who passed away last April. So here you go Levon buddy, you may be gone but not forgotten. Your listening to The Band on one o'three point one on The Sun. Classic Rock for the Keys!*"

*"Virgil Kane is the name, and I served on the Danville train.
'Till Stoneman's calvary came, and tore up them tracks again.*

*In the winter of '65, we were hungry, just barely alive.
By May the 10th, Richmond had fell,
It's a time, I remember oh so well...*

*The night they drove old Dixie down,
And the bells were ringing.
The night they drove old Dixie down,
And the people were singing
They went, Na na na, na na na..."*

"What the fuck is this honky shit man?" Franco said.

"My car, my radio." Chet replied. "I'll be god damned if I'm listening to that Cuban shit your people call music."

"My people?" Franco laughed, "Whatever hillbilly, but let me ask you this. Would you make love to a woman listening to this trailer park jam?"

*"...with my wife in Tennessee. When one day she called to me,
Virgil, quick come see, There goes Robert E. Lee!"*

"First of all Franco," Chet said, "I only make *love* to your mother. Otherwise I'm getting trim... and yes I have made *love* to this song, but I didn't hear your momma complaining."

"Ha ha, you're a funny guy." Franco said, "Reeve's was right man, you are a fucking dick sneeze."

"Again with the dick sneeze?" Chet asked.

"I think someone has a new nickname." Jesse laughed.

"Eat shit." Chet said.

"...na na, na na na la na na na na."

*Like my father before me, I will work the land.
And like my brother above me, who took a rebel stand.*

*He was just eighteen, proud and brave.
But a Yankee laid him in his grave.
I swear by the mud below my feet.
You can't raise a Kane back up,
When he's in defeat.*

*The night they drove old Dixie down,
The bells were ringing.
The night they drove old Dixie down,
And the people were singing,
They went, Na na na, na na na na, la na na na..."*

The song ended and the DJ came back on the radio;

"That was the Night They Drove Old Dixie, by The Band. In memory of Levon Helm who died of an apparent heart attack last April. He will be missed. And now for Andrea Mitchel and your news on the hour..." The DJ said.

"Thank you Chuck." She said, "Earlier today, Michael Browning a spokesperson for Translantic Cruiselines announced that the multibillion dollar cruise agency lost contact with their flagship HMS Lady of Acadia. The ship last made contact when its Captain, David Benoit told Port Authority that he would be changing course south of Bermuda in an effort to avoid Hurricane Ernesto, which gained hurricane strength earlier this week. The storm was expected to make landfall in North Carolina, but veered off course towards the island of Bermuda instead."

"Jesus..." Jesse muttered.

"The HMS Lady of Acadia, an estimated four hundred billion dollar ocean liner was the flagship of Translantic Cruiselines' new Imperial Class oceanliners. An ambitious new line of ships intended to rival their competitor, Royal Caribbean Cruiselines' Oasis Class; Allure, and Oasis of the Seas."

"According to Mr. Browning, Translantic Cruiseline's confirmed that there are four thousand seven hundred and thirty three passengers on board the vessel, including six hundred and seventy crew members."

"Mr. Browning also said that Translantic Cruiselines has held several briefings with the United States, Canadian, and British naval authorities and confirmed that a search and rescue operation is currently under way."

"When asked if they had reason to believe that the oceanliner may have sank, Mr. Browning said 'No comment' leaving wide speculation that the half billion dollar oceanliner may have in fact suffered a catastrophic accident. At this time however, there is no evidence to support that the Lady of Acadia has sank, and no official report has been confirmed."

"These events overshadow the sinking of the Italian cruiseliner Costa Concordia, which ran aground earlier this year."

The news anchor paused for a moment and then continued;

"In other news, President Obama..."

"How the fuck do you lose a cruiseship?" Chet said, "I mean ships get lost all the time, but *this*? This is ridiculous."

"Yeah man, I mean that Italian shit was bad enough." Franco replied, "Two massive cruiseships sinking in one year, that's unheard of right?"

"These days?" Jesse shrugged.

A short time later the Tempest approached the Long Key Viaduct, a seven mile stretch of steel and concrete over open gemstone waters. Chet greeted the open roadway with an assertive shifting of the gears, exceeding speeds defiantly above the speed limit. In very little time at all, they were miles out to sea.

"Hey," Franco patted Chet on the shoulder, "Pull over man."

"You best not be thinking of pukin' in my car." Chet said, he downshifted and eased the car to an abrupt stop.

"Nah, man. I'm not sick or anything." Franco reassured him.

"So... what's up?"

Without saying a word, Franco flung himself out of the convertible and stripped down to his bathing suit.

"Franco," Jesse yelled, "What the hell are you doing?"

"Get out man." Franco smiled, "You guys are gonna love this."

"Love what?" Chet turned to Jesse, "What the fuck is he talking-"

Franco climbed on top of the railing of the bridge and sprung himself off. He was laughing maniacally the whole way down.

"Franco!" Jesse cried out. He shot out of the vehicle and made his way to the railing. It was at least a thirty foot drop to the water. Franco was doing a backstroke saying something in Spanish. Chet made his way to the railing.

"That was fucking awesome!" Franco yelled, "Come on you pussies, jump in man."

"How are you gonna get back up here?" Chet said.

"There's a ladder on the girder." Jesse said. He was looking at one on the concrete beams beneath him. There was what looked like large staples riveted from the ground up. Franco was casually making his way over to it.

"Ok," Chet smiled, "I'm sold."

Chet pulled his valuables from his wallet and stuffed them under the driver's seat. Without any hesitation he ran to the rusty railing and catapulted himself off of the bridge.

Now it was Jesse's turn. He looked over the railing. Franco was halfway up the ladder. Chet was staring up at Jesse.

"The waters fantastic," Chet yelled to him, "Come on, jump."

"Yeah man," Franco added, "Do it!"

Jesse couldn't help but think of the old motherly saying; If all your friends jumped off a bridge, would *you*?

Jesse laughed, "Apparently so." He said to himself and then swan dived off the railing.

CHAPTER FOUR

The air stunk of the sea and... *decay?* Jesse thought. *No*, not *decay*. It was a musty smell, *mold perhaps*. He opened his eyes, but his vision was blurry, too obscured. His head pounded like a jackhammer. *Where am I?* He wondered. *Did I hit my head on the way down? Am I drowning in the sea?* Surely Chet or Franco would save him... *No...wait...* That was months ago. His vision began to focus and the dread had finally sunk in. Jesse awoke on the floor of cabin 303 on board the ill fated HMS Lady of Acadia.

Jesse forced himself off the floor and quickly rushed to Zach's bedside. The pilot was very still, very pale. Jesse checked his pulse. It was faint, but it *was* there. He put his finger under Zach's nose and felt the wisp of soft warm breath. *He's still breathing*, Jesse thought to himself, *Thank God*.

"Jesus, how long was I out?" Jesse asked himself. He checked his watch, but it was still frozen at *3:03am* and judging from the darkness outside the porthole it was still in the early morning hours. "What...the fuck?"

Then Jesse began to inspect Zach's wounds. His stitch work seemed to have held and despite the Pilot's grievous condition, he was remarkably in stable health. It wouldn't last though, and Jesse knew it. He had nothing to fight off the impending infection and considering the large amount of blood loss Zach had sustained, fever would take him quickly. He needed medical supplies. Jesse had decided that finding the ship's infirmary had just become his top priority.

"Zach," Jesse said, his voice rasp and shaken, "you're going to be alright. You hear me? You're gonna be alright. I will be back soon, I promise.... I promise."

Jesse grabbed his flashlight and made his way back into the long dark corridor. Once again he could feel the eerie sense that he was being watched, but when he shined the powerful beam down the hall the only thing he saw was a haze of dust that blew about like a New England snow flurry.

"Hello!" He yelled, "Is there anybody there?"

There was only dead silence.

Fuck it, Jesse thought, *I can't fart around here all day, I need to move....*

He began to move down the corridor in a stride that was a little more than a jog. If he ran, he would tire himself out. It was an enormous ship and there was a *lot* of ground to cover.

The infirmary was located on one of the lower levels below the bridge. Jesse was confronted with a door at the end of the hall marked *Crew Access Only*. It would lead him to the same staircase he used when he had entered the ship from the bow. He quickly made his way through the downward spiral of steps that led him to the sublevel and a red metal door marked with the words *Health and Human Services*. He unlatched the hooked door handle and pushed the door open. It was particularly heavy, Jesse had assumed that the sea air had rusted the hinges a bit, but with a little effort he forced it wide open.

On the other side of the door was a snub hallway covered with doors to various offices. At the end of the hall was a white door with a distinct red cross marked on it.

You will stay, won't you Jesse? It is soooo lonely here. All the others came, and went... But, you will stay? Won't you Jesse? It is soooo lonely here.

I just want to play with you, like I did the others. But they all left me Jesse. You won't leave, will you Jesse?

Links:

Equipment of the US Coast Guard

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Equipment_of_the_United_States_Coast_Guard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equipment_of_the_United_States_Coast_Guard)

HH-65 Dolphin

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HH-65_Dolphin

Bermuda Triangle

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Coast Guard Flashlight:

http://www.flashlightsonline.com/coastguard_flashlights.php

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Treating Impaled Objects/Puncture Wounds

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Classic Rock Station, Florida Keys

<http://www.sun103.com/main.html>

It is because all man's faith is in God, that there isn't enough faith in man.

It occurs to me, that I'm either a madman, or I'm the sanest person in a mad mad world.

